

Good Morning.

My name is Suzanne Acuna. I am a school board member at the Blackwater Community School located on the Gila River Indian Community in Arizona.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on the Bureau of Indian Education and Bureau of Indian Affairs fiscal year 2017 budget request.

I first want to address those sections of the Indian Affairs FY 2017 budget request that we fully support and then discuss those with which we have concerns and recommendations.

First, we fully support the Bureau's school construction request for Replacement School Construction and Facilities Component Replacement. We were one of schools to apply for new school construction and one of ten finalist schools that made a presentation to the selection panel. Our school was constructed over 70 years ago and through renovation and repair the 70 year-old facility is considered to be in good condition as measured by the Bureau's facility condition index. However because the school was constructed for no more than 100 students in 1939 and given our present enrollment of 253, the facility no longer has the space to provide the core education functions expected of a high achieving school. Our school is a high achieving school and has met the AYP standards since the No Child Legislation was passed. Whereas the facility is considered to be in good condition when using the standards used by the Bureau, it is not in good condition to meet current education standards expected by our parents, community, or tribe. We urge Congress to provide the resources needed to construct new schools not only for schools that have facilities in poor condition as measured by the Facility Condition Index, but also for schools whose facility no longer meets national current education standards set by the state or by Congress. The Bureau requested \$45 million dollars for new school construction. We know the need is much greater than \$45 million but without sufficient planning in place by the Bureau it is difficult to know the real need. As an example, we noted the Bureau submitted a budget request without a list of new priority schools and without submission of Project Data Sheets for FY 2017. The Bureau started the new school construction process early enough to provide sufficient information to Congress, but because of long delays in the review process by Central Office, the Department of the Interior, and Office of Management and Budget, the Bureau was not able to provide more specific information to Congress in this request. We urge Congress to require the Bureau to do a much better job of providing specific information in their Budget request to Congress.

We fully support the Bureau's request for Facilities Improvement and Repair as this is critical to preventing facilities from falling into further disrepair. This account has provided much needed support to our school to improve sections of our 70 year old facility. It is much needed by the more than seventy schools considered to need replacement and will curtail further facility deterioration.

For the Bureau of Indian Education's budget request we strongly support the request for Tribal Grant Support Costs that will fully fund the administrative support costs for schools. For too long tribes and school have operated without sufficient resources to meet the administrative requirements expected by the administration or by Congress.

Not having sufficient administrative support costs can lead to audit issues and without sufficient resources in this account, many schools have to supplement it from other school accounts that are already insufficient.

We also support the increase in Education IT. We noted the request states the budget request will increase broadband rates to schools. Many schools have purchased broadband services from outside providers because the Bureau's broadband is too slow to accomplish the education requirements mandated by the adoption of Common Core standards; increased requirements to provide professional development for staff; and conduct assessments on line. The current broadband service provided by the Bureau is not sufficient and we urge Congress to fund this much-needed request. This will save schools money that is currently used to procure Internet service elsewhere.

The BIE has requested two line items of serious concern. One is a request of an additional \$8 million for Education Program Management and the other for an additional \$2 million for Education Program Enhancements. The purpose of these two line items is to staff the Bureau's Education Resource Centers. The Bureau established an Education Resource Center almost fifty years ago in Albuquerque to improve achievement levels and have initiated other reorganizations over the past forty years that included establishment of the education office in Albuquerque, the second time this has been done, and current locations of the Education Line Offices. The Bureau has gone through numerous reorganizations, some to address budget cuts and others in an attempt to improve education achievement. The last reorganization started by the Bureau was never completed prior to the start of the current reorganization. Reorganization is expensive. The Bureau is on track to spend millions of dollars again on a reorganization effort. While we realize the purpose of the reorganizations has often times been to improve Indian education, we believe schools themselves know best what is needed to improve achievement levels, not bureaucracies. School instructional staff- teachers and principals- are with their students every day and know what is required to improve learning and achievement in their individual schools. If schools were allowed to plan and receive funding locally to improve student achievement for their specific schools, it would save the government money on maintaining federal government staff and recurring costs for on going overhead. Once this reorganization is in place it will cost millions of dollars every year to maintain. The reorganization will result in growing the bureaucracy with little impact on teaching and learning. The nation has been trying to improve achievement levels since 1994 with the initiation of Goals 2000. What has been learned so far is that improvement is made school-by-school, classroom-by-classroom. Schools need resources at their level because school improvement is done school by school. Each school knows what their students require to be successful but don't have sufficient resources to make the needed improvement. We recommend half of the funds requested for Education Program Management and Education Enhancements, five million dollars, be programmed for school improvement efforts that are allocated directly to schools and not to a government bureaucracy.

While we support an increase for ISEP we note it is less than a 3% increase. While inflation is currently low we are in competition with other school districts located close to Phoenix. We must not only match other school's salaries we must do better because

our school is located in a rural area more than forty miles from the Phoenix suburbs. This means teachers must commute to our school eighty to one hundred miles round trip. If we are to recruit and retain high quality staff which is especially critical to rural isolated schools; pay for increased costs for new materials and training to implement the Common Core curriculum and the requirements of the No Child Left Behind legislation, it is critical to have sufficient core funding resources to do so. Our school like others in the Bureau funded education system teaches Native language and culture to all our students. To provide this much needed and critical program we need to pay a full time culture and language teacher. The current ISEP formula does not provide the needed resources to support our language program and a less than 3% increase is not sufficient to maintain high achievement at our school and provide our culture and language program. We are living in a resource-constrained environment and know it is difficult to find other resources to increase ISEP. As discussed previously we recommend this committee move five million of the increased request for Education Program Management and Education Program Enhancements to ISEP. This would allow each school to locally improve their education program as discussed previously and meet our specific education requirement to teach our students their native language and in our case, continue as a high achieving school.

A part of the reorganization effort is to place more responsibility for education with tribes. We believe in local control and self-determination and have been a grant school for over 25 years. The Bureau has requested two million dollars for tribal education departments. If the Bureau wants tribes to be successful they would provide tribes with the means to be successful. Two million dollars is woefully inadequate. When the Bureau initiated self-determination compacts with tribes to assume previously operated non-education functions, they provided tribes with funds used by the Bureau to administer these programs. These administrative funds were commonly referred to as tribal shares. The Bureau of Indian Education wants tribes to assume education functions without adequate resources and expects them to be successful. Tribes can be successful but they need adequate resources. We recommend Congress provide resources for tribal education departments and can start by requiring the Bureau to provide tribal shares now used for the Bureau's administrative functions. This is not part of the Bureau's reorganization effort and while the Bureau has requested funds for its own administrative effort it has not requested funds for tribes.

We support the budget increase request for early childhood education. For the past twenty-five years the Bureau of Indian Education has implemented a high quality research based two-generation early childhood program, the Family and Child Education program. The program includes home visiting, early childhood education for three and four year olds, and intensive parent engagement. The FACE program focuses on children and parents because research shows that early childhood education alone is not sufficient to assure children's education success. It requires the whole family to be involved. The FACE program is the only program in the BIE that has longitudinal data to prove its effectiveness. The FACE programs currently receive \$289,000 for each site that provides funding at approximately \$3,500 per participant. As a comparison the federally funded Head Start program receives funding at approximately \$10,000 per participant

based on a 2014 Head Start fact sheet report. We request Congress stipulate the FACE program receive the same amount of funding as Head Start. To move toward this funding level we recommend Congress move the other half of funds requested for Education Program Management and Education Enhancements, five million dollars, to FACE. This would result in each site receiving \$4,653.00 per participant.

Second, we request Congress require the Bureau to establish an early childhood funding mechanism similar to the Indian School Equalization Program. CFR 25, Part 39 references such a funding formula that was never developed. Thirty-nine (39) states currently provide some access to state funded prekindergarten programs. Florida, Georgia and Oklahoma offer pre-school to all four year olds. Early childhood education is an investment. The latest research examining early education initiatives shows mounting evidence that not only is early education a school readiness strategy or a way of closing the achievement gap, now economic experts from the Minneapolis Reserve Bank and James Heckman of the University of Chicago demonstrate through their research that investments in early education should be considered an economic development strategy. Early education investments yield a return that far exceeds the return on most public projects and yield no less than \$8 for every \$1 invested, and some such as the Perry Pre-School study show a return on investment of \$17 for every \$1 invested. The Bureau of Indian Education uses an intervention model instead of using a prevention model. Their model is based on remediation through Title 1, Special Education, and requested increases to the Education Enhancement and Education Program Management accounts. These are programs that will spend millions of dollars each year to remediate learning problems that could have been addressed and alleviated prior to children coming to school. Remediation models currently adopted by the Bureau are extremely expensive to maintain. Some people liken it to continuously repairing potholes. That work never ends and maintains subpar performance.

Achievement gaps that emerge during the elementary and secondary grades are difficult and expensive to change. Key skills such as motivation, persistence, and self-control are developed early, prior to kindergarten age. We believe the Bureau should invest in early childhood education to prevent problems rather than continue with their current enormously expensive intervention model. Their model has not worked in the past and given more than forty years of experience with reorganization after reorganization that old model will not work in the future. Adopting a prevention model by investing in early childhood education could solve the continuous need to reorganize the Bureau. We recommend the Bureau institutionalize the Early Childhood program in ISEP. This can be accomplished by adding a weighted student unit for early childhood at no less a weight than is used for kindergarten, which has a weight of 1.15. In FY 2017 that would translate to approximately \$6,321 per student. This would provide more resources for the FACE program and institutionalize the program. This is the right thing to do based on the latest research and will result in long term benefits to children, families, and tribes. This concludes my testimony.